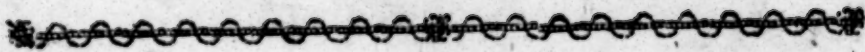


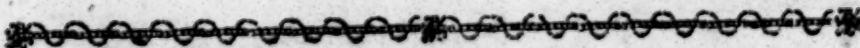
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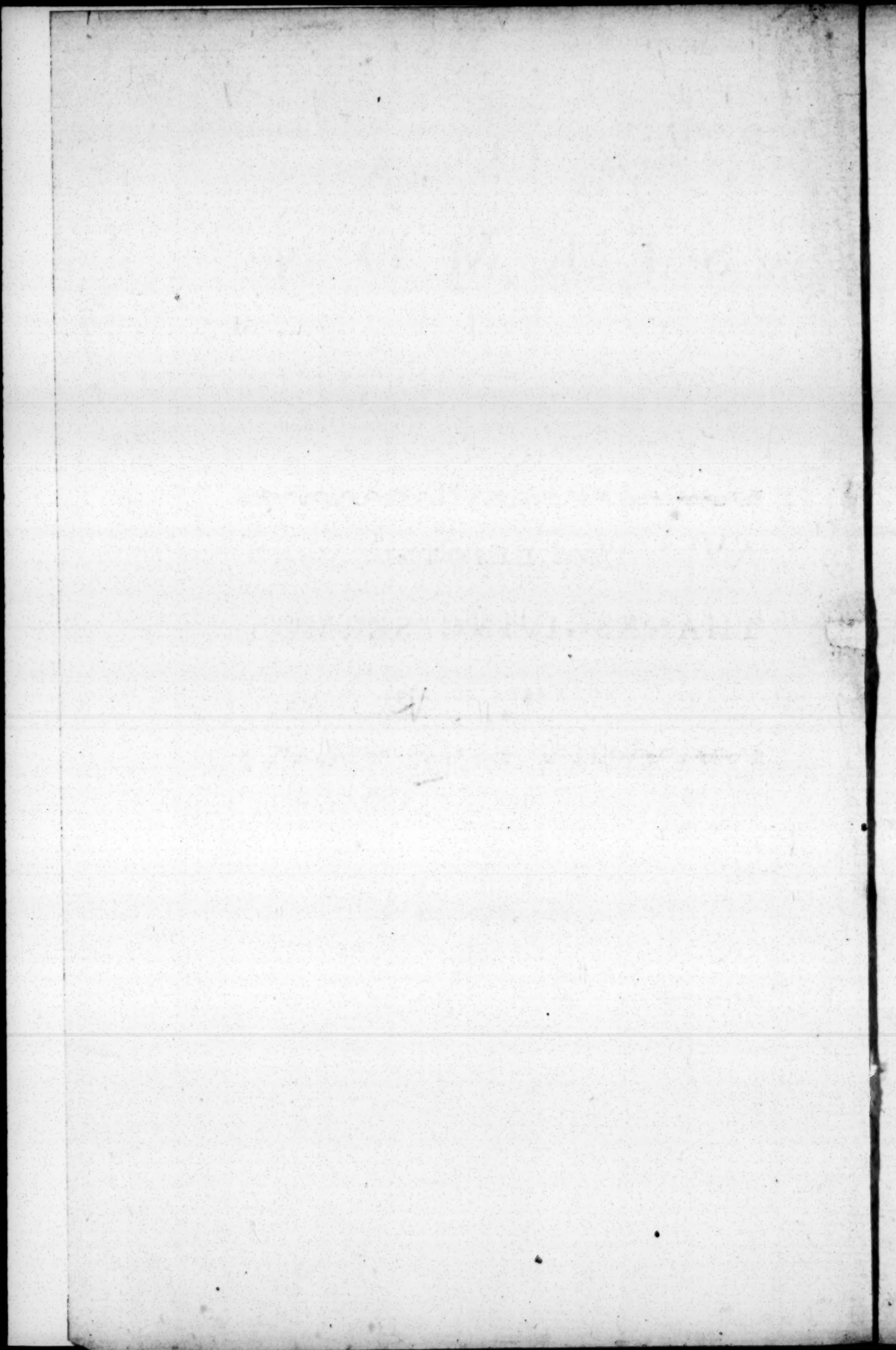
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Mr. ELIOT's
THANKSGIVING SERMON,

NOVEMBER 20, 1794.





A
S E R M O N,
DELIVERED
ON THE DAY
OF
ANNUAL THANKSGIVING,
NOVEMBER 20, 1794.

✓
By JOHN ELIOT, A. M.
PASTOR OF THE NEW-NORTH CHURCH, IN BOSTON.



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John A. Popkin

SEYMOUR

ANNUAL TRANSACTIONS

BY JOHN A. POPKIN





PSALM XCVII. 1.

THE LORD REIGNETH—LET THE EARTH REJOICE.



JOY is a lively affection, arising from a happy constitutional frame, from the state of things around us, or from those contemplations which give an agreeable exercise to the faculties of the mind, and a glow to our *benevolent feelings*. When it is wholly mechanical, there is no evidence that the temper is peculiarly excellent ; it may flash into transport, and become wild, like other passions. When we can rejoice only as the state of external things is prosperous or pleasing, we must not think ourselves secure of the present sensations, which will not last ; the world is full of changes, and that which we depend upon for happiness may infuse poison into our cup. We ought to be influenced by principles more than passion, and by sentiments of religion as much as by the emotions of humanity. Devout contemplations

templations enrich the soul with a satisfaction the most noble, and joys the most permanent. Here the pleasures are equally refined and lasting.

Far be it from me to recommend religious enthusiasm. Although this may not be the joy of the hypocrite, yet it is mechanical, and cannot spring from any fixed view of the government and providence of the supreme Being. In him we should *rejoice* from proper reflections on his character, as the God of love, the greatest and best of beings, who is good to all, and causes every event which takes place in the numerous worlds under his care, to subserve the interests and happiness of his creatures.

The Lord reigneth ; the earth is called his kingdom, but the subjects of his government may be found in every part of the universe. His intelligent offspring, as they obtain proper ideas of his sovereignty and dominion, have their hearts enlarged with gratitude, and filled with joy and gladness.

That which strikes us most forcibly in the character of a king *is his power*. This constitutes the majesty and glory of earthly kings. Our eyes are dazzled as we gaze at the trophies of their victory and the splendour of their triumphs. But how shocking is the dominion of the proud monarchs of this world,—whose chariot wheels roll in blood, who exercise their power to oppress their people, and with
instruments

instruments of cruelty in their hands, go forth to destroy their enemies ! Few, among the rulers of the nations, exert themselves in the cause of virtue and freedom ; to make their subjects happy, or to do good to mankind. How wretched were the people of Rome under the tyranny of the Cæsars ! What must the people of Judea have suffered, being subjected to the caprice and cruelty of Herod, who destroyed all the little children in one of their most beautiful cities ! Can the people rejoice that such kings reign over them ? Happy are they, and such only, to whom are granted the blessings of freedom and good government ! where kings have no power in their wrath, or in a wanton humour to oppress them.

We *rejoice* in the government of God, because his dominion displays equal power, wisdom, and goodness. “ The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice ; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.” If we consider his sovereignty, we cannot help owning his power. He made all things, and by a word could annihilate the work of his hands. But we cannot confine our attention to his natural attributes ; when we say, *he doeth as he pleaseth*, we must take into consideration, that the counsels of his will are according
to

to the immutable laws of justice and truth, and that he is as beautiful and lovely in his character, as he is *glorious in his strength*.

Some writers upon theological subjects, we must confess, have used the word Sovereignty in a sense, which gives only an idea of power. This arises from a disposition to pry into subjects too hard to be understood ; and when they attempt to explain the divine decrees, and are unable to answer objections necessarily arising from their manner of treating the subject, they shelter themselves under a form of expression, and think if they hold up God a *Sovereign*, nothing further will be objected. Yet it is only referring things to his power, whilst the inquiry is, how they can illustrate his wisdom, his justice, or his goodness, consistently with their sentiments ? We ought never to give the passions of an earthly king to the divine Governor. Should we do it, we could not rejoice that *he reigneth*. To reason justly, we must obtain a most amiable representation of his dominion, whether we celebrate the perfections of his character, or confine our attention to the earth, on which we dwell, as a part of his kingdom ;—or bring to our view *his providence* over us in this region of the globe ; for we are to *rejoice* that the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places, and to praise the *Lord for his goodness*.

We

We shall be more particular in reflecting upon the attributes of the Deity.

The Lord reigneth.—That there is a God above, who made all things, is a truth as clear as any thing can be made to the reason and conscience of mankind : And how sublime and excellent are the expressions of scripture ! “ All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord, and thy saints shall bless thee. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power ; to make known to the sons of men, his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.”

All the works of the Lord declare that “ *power be-
longeth to him.*” After we have turned our eyes to those vast bodies which roll in the expanse of heaven, “ the sun which rules by day, and the moon and stars which rule by night,” we may yet enlarge our minds by contemplating the power of the great Governor of the world, which is exerted in creating various ranks and orders of intelligent beings. For all creatures of the various systems received their distinction, their powers and faculties from him. He is the same almighty and immutable Being, though the course of nature be changed, and the heavens vanish like a scroll. “ His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.”

Who can doubt whether such a Being is able to

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reward

reward or to punish his creatures? He can, according to his pleasure, reward them with the glory of his presence, or turn them from the mansions of heaven, those seats of light and knowledge, to the *chambers of hell*, the dreary, dark scenes of perdition and misery.

But not to dwell too long upon *this attribute* of our heavenly King, lest we feel too strongly the force of these expressions of the Psalmist—"The Lord reigneth, let the *people tremble*:"—We go on to speak of his truth, and righteousness, or wisdom.

We cannot conceive of him, as God, except he be a perfect moral Governor. But if he is as wise and beneficent, as powerful, his dominion must be perfect. When we bring him to our minds, as a King giving laws to his subjects, these must be wise and just, or the very substance of wisdom and truth. The requisitions, he makes from his creatures, must be adapted, likewise, to their capacities and circumstances. We are his intelligent offspring. What then are our ideas of his administrations, he being the Governor, and we the governed? On the one side, are his power and authority; his laws written for our instruction, the necessary sanctions, his *judgments*, which are *true* and *righteous* altogether. On the other, our obligations, our freedom of action, our regard to his authority

thority and honour ; or our obedience, in connexion with an expectation of reward when we do well, and of punishment when we do wickedly. Every idea of his character, as that great and glorious Being who filleth heaven and earth with his presence, which we gather from the sacred scriptures, tends to form good sentiments, and to stimulate good actions ; “ Who will render to every man according to his works,” says the apostle Paul : “ To them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality—*eternal life* ; but unto them that are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness—*indignation and wrath*.” It is also among the virtues of the rational mind thus to conceive of God. The language of scripture and the dictates of reason strengthen each other. Can men expect to be rewarded, who despise the government of God, and refuse to *have such a King reign over them* ? “ If I be a father, where is mine honour ; if I be a master, where is my fear ; saith the Lord ?” They who love him, delight in virtue ; it is the perfection of their character to resemble him. Happy likewise in contemplating his Majesty, and their dependence on him, they must rejoice. “ Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein ; let the floods clap their hands ; let the hills be joyful together—before *the Lord* ; for he cometh to judge

judge the earth ; with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with truth."

In the next place, we are to celebrate the goodness of the Divine Being. Is there one in this assembly, who can help feeling emotions of gratitude, and saying, " Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits !" What a beautiful passage is there in the book of Acts, where the apostle Paul addresses the people !—" Nevertheless, he hath not left himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

To the same purpose are the words of the Psalmist—" The eyes of all wait upon thee ; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and suppliest the want of every living thing."

How much are we indebted to the scriptures for our sentiments and expressions, when we speak of the attributes of the Deity, and the excellency of his government. We might quote further passages from every page of this sacred volume. I shall only add one more, from the 145th Psalm—" One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honour of thy Majesty, and of thy wondrous works. And men shall speak of thy terrible acts : And I will declare

declare thy greatness. They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. All thy works shall praise thee, and thy saints bless thee.”*

The other head, according to the method of our illustrating the discourse, is the interposition of God in the affairs of mankind; for he ruleth all events
by

* I have been so particular in illustrating the Kingdom of God by expressions from the Bible, because a certain infidel writer has affirmed without *modest* assurance, that nothing is said concerning the perfections of the Supreme Being, except in a few passages of the book of Job and the 19th Psalm. Did this writer ever read the other psalms, and that fine piece of reasoning in the 17th of Acts, or the 1st chapter of the epistle to the Romans? He saith, he keeps no Bible by him, and that he always detested the book. All he knows about the 19th psalm is from reading Mr. Addison's hymn!—But why does he write against what, from his own confession, he knows nothing about?

It is strange, that, in this age of inquiry, such a work should be fashionable; or that such a *play upon words*, where he mentions the *two testaments*, such indelicate insinuations of the birth of Jesus, and so many *puerile conceits*, should pass for argument and keen satire. Nothing but the name of Thomas Paine has given it a reputation, except with *superficial readers*, and a certain class of *talkers*, who imagine themselves *wits*, but have no other claim, than sitting in the seat of the scornful.

We wish Mr. Paine would read the other writings of Mr. Addison, though it is not probable he will ever possess so fair a mind. The title of his book is said to have some charm. He can hardly have a claim of originality in this, as he must have heard of the *redoubtable* Ethan Allen, who wrote the *Oracles of Reason*.

Of such writers we may say, in the words of Dr. Johnson, “That their reputation is so ready to fall to pieces, that no great praise can be derived from their destruction. To object is easy, and it has been well observed, that *the band* which cannot build a hovel, may demolish a temple.

by his providence, and is styled the Governor *among the nations*.

Hence do we see that their prosperity and happiness are connected with the general practice of virtue; and that the fear of God is *true wisdom*; upon which depend the prudence of laws and the policy of government—indeed the stability of every system for promoting human felicity. As he has given us reason and conscience, and enjoins upon us our duty, (besides giving us a capacity to perform it) he has planted within us such propensities and affections, as make us sensible that we are not to live for ourselves alone. In the frame of our minds, and by written testimonies, he hath pointed out the excellency of benevolence, to contrast with the misery of selfishness or vice. The dread on the minds of the guilty, the serenity and joyful expectations of the virtuous, manifest, as was before observed, the moral government of the supreme Being—the same with individuals and nations.

What must we think of politicians who call in question the necessary connection between religion and government, or deny the salutary influence of religion upon the manners of men! The wise men of ancient nations made this the basis of their social institutions, as we learn from those renowned historians, Livy and Polybius, and the books of their
philos-

philosophers.* This is certainly a good argument in favour of religion. For if it is calculated to lessen the miseries and improve the happiness of mankind, what greater evidence need we have that it comes from God! His delight is with the sons of men; therefore hath he blessed them with the means of virtue, and pointed out the road to happiness. They who leave and forsake him; such as are unmindful of his statutes, his judgments and mercies, will, sooner or later, be made sensible of their folly. In what manner he will visit the nations with his rod, we can judge only by the effects, in places where the cry of oppression, or tumult of the people, is heard—where the floods lift up their waves, and threaten to overwhelm

* *Voltaire*, a writer more sprightly than solid, and quite a freethinker, was afraid of the consequence of setting aside religion altogether. D'Alembert, in his private letters to the king of Prussia, speaks with contempt of his metaphysical talents on this account. But let him speak for himself:—"An atheist king is more dangerous than a fanatical *Roiwaillac*." And again:—"About the 15th century, Atheists swarmed in Italy. What was the consequence? It was not more common to ask a friend to sup, than to poison him. The hand which embraced, would as readily plant a dagger in the heart. There were, at that time, professors in every art of villainy, as we now see professors of music and mathematics. If such manners had continued, Italy would have been as much depopulated as Peru, after the Spanish invasion." See his essay on morality.

Whether the same state was dreaded in France—it seems the philosophers and statesmen are now countenancing the belief of a God and a future state; and perhaps may see the necessity of recurring to some Christian institutions, which they have set aside. In this they ought not to be commended, however we may admire their zeal in the cause of freedom. It is astonishing that some serious men among ourselves, and ministers of the gospel, should excuse this, on account of the superstitions of the church of Rome:—But what should we think of physicians, who, to cure a disease, administered poison?—Is there not complete religious liberty in the *Constitution of the United States*? This makes it very unnecessary to pass an eulogium, that France is "*the only place where men are free with respect to religious establishments and rights of conscience.*"

overwhelm, or *have* destroyed the most beautiful countries and nations, famous for arts or arms; the radiance of whose glory is succeeded by darkness, and whose name, if not lost in oblivion, is remembered but to point a moral to us, and should be regarded for our admonition. Have we not more than one instance of the slender partition between licentious liberty and despotism, where we see people wretched, owing to their want of good regulations, which are consequent upon the practice of virtue and sentiments of religion? Nothing else can restrain the passions of men, and the prevalence of those lusts which cause wars and fightings on the earth.

We are led to make a reflection in this place, which is often made, and sometimes expressed with less reverence than the subject demands. **How** can we conceive of the Supreme Being as Governor of the nations, when we see so much wickedness in every place? When we observe the state of the nations, are not most people under the iron rod of oppression? Are they not governed by cruel tyrants—or without order and government, which is but a little more eligible? And are not the cries of their distress like the roaring of the sea when swelling by a tempest? A proper consideration of this question will bring the answer to every mind, especially to those who believe his word, where he speaks by the mouth of his servants,

servants, those messengers of truth who declare his will, and who tell us why he putteth down one kingdom, and exalteth another:—that it is not merely to display the glories of his power, but to manifest his regard to *truth* and *righteousness*. Whilst his judgments are abroad in the earth, it is that the inhabitants may learn righteousness. Sometimes, therefore, we are to rejoice with trembling; but at all times there is occasion to rejoice that the Lord reigneth. When we consider the jarring of men's passions, the chaos of their opinions, and the wild state to which every thing seems tending—would it not be confusion altogether, did not the Lord sit on the circle of the earth, and still the noise of the sea, saying to their proud waves, *Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further?*

We are now to bring to our view the providential dispensations of almighty God, that we may praise him for his care and kindness to us, who dwell in these regions of the globe. And may we prove ourselves to be the friends of virtue and freedom, of *religion* and *humanity*!

From what hath been said, it is evident that there must be a *general* and *particular providence*.

Without aiming at abstract researches to demonstrate a particular providence, it may be illustrated from *our* own feelings, or the concern which all intelligent beings have for their offspring. To sup-
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pose God could be indifferent about the things which he has made, when he hath put a tender concern in the temper of his creatures, is absurd. “ Besides, such a desertion and neglect of beings which he hath made, upon a careful examination, will be found inconsistent with the true idea we are to form of him ; since nothing is beneath his creation, nothing can be below his care.” This appears from fact. For notwithstanding the contrary qualities of things, as they appear to our eyes, we find the world is preserved in its present form, its present order. That the seasons come round, with such a profusion of blessings, as manifest his over-ruling providence, who hath made every thing beautiful in its season—Summer and winter ; seed time and harvest. By his providence, the grass groweth for the cattle, and corn and wine are prepared for the service of man. “ He giveth snow like wool, and scattereth the hoar frost like ashes.” And by his providence the face of the earth is renewed, and shines with new lustre and beauty, after being lashed with storms. By his providence he preserves the regular succession of day and night, with the revolving seasons of the year. Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour, until the evening. And with new strength and vigour, he rises at the voice of the bird—himself hailing the approach of day : for truly light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun ; it almost makes us forget that we are excluded the *paradisical state*. When

When we cast our eyes around the globe, making particular observations upon climates and regions, surely the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places ; and we ought to rejoice, and praise the Lord, for the good land we dwell in. It is pleasant and fruitful, a place convenient for commerce, and every kind of navigation, the benefits of which we continually experience, and are to be particularly acknowledged, *this day of publick Thanksgiving*. The present year hath been, in many respects, a time of prosperity, and seems to be closing with abundant instances of divine goodness.

God hath blessed our trade and commerce, so that we have been supplied with all the productions of other countries ; and there has been sufficient employment for persons in every art and mechanical business. And whilst the hand of the diligent has been exerted, it has not been without encouragement from the expectation of some considerable reward, as the price of labour and industry. Hence our merchandise and hire have been successful, according to the general calculations men make, who speculate in the matter—though many among us have been injured in their property, and cruel depredations, or, to use a more fashionable word, *spoliations*, have been made upon us, by a nation, which, as far as they countenance these things, must be equally destitute of justice and policy.

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In the next place—Let us consider how the labours of the husbandman have been blessed.

No scorching drought or blasting mildew ; no devouring insects have cut off the fruits of summer, or prevented the joy of the harvest. Though an untimely frost may have injured some particular spots of this well cultivated country, the abundance is so great that *our cup runneth over* ; and there has seldom been a year that our fields, and stores, and streets, afforded a completer view of the plenty of the land. If wealth is so great a blessing, ought we not *to rejoice* upon a survey of our country ?—Surely the inhabitants of the inland towns are growing rich, and need not envy the high life and luxury of the merchant, or complain of any advantages people in *seaports* can have above them.

While we speak of our advantages as a people, and our eligible situation in the earth, let us not forget our prosperity which arises from *the blessings of society*.

We every day experience the advantage of our *Federal Government*, and of the present constitution of this *Commonwealth*. When we look among the nations of Europe, what people are so free and happy, in less danger of despotic power, or that confusion which always arises from licentiousness of principles and manners ? Have we not wise and good laws ? And is there not a disposition to submit to authority ?

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It is true that lawless men there are in every community, and such men have arisen in open hostility to the government, so that armies have been prepared to quell their riots and insurrections ; but so far *good* has come out of the evil, that it has increased the union of all orders of men to support the laws and authority. Must we not admire the prudence, firmness and wisdom of the *President of these States* ?—His great virtues have been displayed in this important scene, as well as in preserving our nation from mingling in European contentions. We have now our minds full of expectation. May we have further occasion *to rejoice* on account of our present prosperity and peace, and in the honour and dignity of our national character. We may well complain of those who wish us evil. May all who love our prosperity, prosper.

Happy would it be for us, had we no disputes with the aborigines of the land ! But we hear the confused noise of the warrior upon the frontiers. We should be thankful, however, that there has been less effusion of blood, and that our officers and soldiers have acquitted themselves with some honour during the last campaign. May they behave worthily, like Americans, whilst they are in the field ;—and may we soon be blessed with the *abundance of peace* !

In looking over the mercies of the year, we should be thankful that it has been a healthful season. In
this

this town and the environs, no disorder has prevailed;—especially the diseases which have been common among children in years past. One evidence of gratitude is to *feel* for others. Let us praise God for his goodness to us, and indulge emotions of sympathy towards our brethren *in other* states. Every blessing from the house of the Lord to all people in adversity.

May our prayers this day mingle with the sigh of the prisoner!—Who can help remembering, whilst we enjoy the sumptuous table, our unhappy brethren in Algiers?—Freemen of America in slavery, hard and cruel bondage, who

“Towards their country cast a weeping eye!”
Would to God that we could do more than feel, or *exalt* the voice of humanity.

But whilst we bear these children of affliction upon our minds, who are at a distance, let us remember the poor of the town. These we have always with us. It is true, that, from the increase of business, many, who were once poor, can get a comfortable subsistence: And they ought not to crave the bread from such as are *real* objects of charity. These are the aged and infirm, who cannot work, and are therefore obliged to beg. Some may be on beds of sickness, who will suffer if they do not obtain help from their neighbours. We doubt not that much has been given; and may the present *contribution of the society*

society prove that we know how to mix *mercy with the sacrifice*.

To conclude with some short observations.

As a religious people, bringing to our minds, this day of publick thanksgiving, an idea of the governing providence of almighty God, we should be without excuse, if we did not mention the continuance of our religious privileges, or the advantages of christianity to ourselves and to the world.

The religion of Jesus Christ not only has a tendency to reform the morals, and improve the state of society, but it has done it in many places. How was the world over-run with idolatry and superstition! Now, wherever the gospel is published, He, who made the heavens and the earth, is acknowledged to be the true God. He is acknowledged to be a pure and spiritual Being. Hence the altars consecrated to idols, the cruel sacrifices, and customs, once prevalent, are done away. This is certainly for the advantage and happiness of mankind; it hath rendered them less ferocious and cruel, and may we not say, less sensually inclined, considering what impure deities once had *temples*.* Whilst

* J. J. Rousseau has been called an opposer of the gospel, on account of some paradoxical opinions; but he says, in answer to the Archbishop of Paris, "I am indeed a Christian. My master insisted more upon good works than articles of faith; he prescribed duties; that which he made necessary to believe, will *make us good*. Happy in being brought up in a religion the most reasonable and most holy that ever was upon earth, I am attached to the worship of my ancestors. It is sweet and consoling to be reckoned among the members of Christ's church, and to join in their religious assemblies. When I am with them, I say to myself, *I am with my brothers*."

Whilst we enjoy so many civil and political blessings, let us also be thankful for the instructions we receive through him, who came into the world to bear witness to the truth, and to preach good will. If we believe the doctrines he taught, we shall be prepared to endure misfortunes, and shall triumph in adversity : At all times, and under all circumstances, these will fill the soul with joy.

Again—Whilst we behold the glory of our nation, let us look back unto the time when this country was a desert, and unknown to the nations of Europe.

Can we help feeling respect to the memory of those excellent men who subdued the wilderness, that we might reap the fruit of their labours ! Happy would it be for the present generation, if they would imitate them in many things, whilst they speak so freely of their imperfections. Allowing that they were too much bigotted, fanatical and prejudiced against christians of different denominations from themselves ; let us consider the age ; it was a time of darkness, from a want of free inquiry into religious subjects. The spirit of persecution, a demon of vanity and malice, has now vanished before the light of truth. But let us imitate their regard to religion, their love of liberty, their patriotic zeal ; their habits of economy and industry ; their obedience to the laws ; their perseverance in toils, which enabled them to form a settlement in these places
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under every discouragement, and through mountains of difficulties. Let us unite their great, strong and manly virtues, with our progress in knowledge and the arts of life, with our more polished manners and customs, with the improvements we are making, or which may be made, for the benefit of society.

Once more :—

Whilst we compare ourselves with the rest of the nations, whether we consider our civil and political institutions, or the blessings we enjoy from the gospel, what a source is there for gratitude and praise !

It may be disagreeable, in one respect, to make comparisons of this nature ; for how can we rejoice if we contemplate the miseries of mankind ! It is evident, however, that we may feel for the miserable, and yet rejoice in the prosperity of *our own estate*. When we praise God, it is not with the selfish idea which sometimes affects individuals, looking around them with pride and cold contempt upon others, who have less to cheer them on the journey of life, and are struggling, perhaps, with *poverty* and *reproach*. The character of the Christian implies benevolence. His breast is warmed with love to God and love to man. Wrapt into future time, he looks unto the glory of the Messiah's kingdom, when there shall be universal peace and happiness. " Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, but they shall beat their
D swords

swords into plough-shares, and spears into pruning-hooks, and learn war no more; for the knowledge of Christ shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea."

As we thus pray to God, whilst we praise him for his goodness which is before our eyes—May he delight to bless us in this Commonwealth—

May nothing interrupt the union of the American States—

May all who praise him, THIS DAY, manifest their grateful sensations by living to his glory—

Alleluia, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

AMEN.—ALLELUIA!



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